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10. adventure games

Computergames, what makes them good ? There is simply not an easy answer to that question. So many people, so many favourite games. Personally I prefer adventure games although I am not necessarily implying that I do not like the very popular... Some.....

From: <http://www.cybercomm.nl/~leovoll/games/games.html>

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Than there is Gabriel Knight II "The Beast Within". I tend to say that this one is more an interactive movie rather than an adventure like ZORK is. Of course, there are many of this type of game. In this case it is the plot that caught my interest. No cheap special effects (especially when compared to Phantasmagoria for example), but a real story with all the aspects you might expect from a scary thriller. Also this game contains a lot of difficult puzzles. To solve them you need more the approach of a clever detective (I am thinking of Mr. Holmes and not Magnum of course), but even then there are few remaining which are really hard to solve. If you are playing one of my favourite games, I can imagine that you might get stuck in the game. Especially with Gabriel Knight this might be the case, so the following

links might help you.



Mild clues and explicit clues.

[Tips for Zork Nemesis](#)



Tips well organised per chapter of the game.

[Gabriel Knight II: The Beast Within - Hints and Tips](#)



A walkthru.

[Tips for The Beast Within: A Gabriel Knight Mystery](#)



Very good site. Here you can find information and hints for many adventure games.

[GameSpot's Home Page for Adventure Games](#) *(exits my frames)*

Some important remarks :



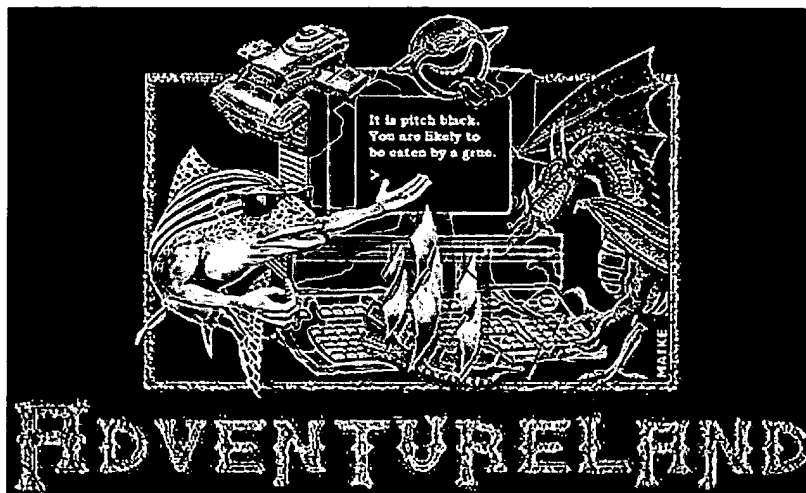
Let me warn you do not use too many tips and tricks for the games because they will definitely spoil them. Just try to get further in the game by using brief hints first



Try to get in the story of the game. This in conjunction with some logical thinking is actually the key for all the puzzles you've got to solve.

I only used one hint for ZORK, but I can tell you I still regret that action. I admit, I also spoiled the game in a certain way. I was quickly impressed and addicted to playing this game, that I finished it within three weeks. Therefore I enjoyed it for too short a period. On the other hand I guess this also tells you how great this game really is.

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This site tries to list all adventure games (interactive fiction) produced over the years. When I say "adventure", I mean text adventures and their graphical decendants, but I don't include RPGs. For a more detailed description of what's included here and not, see the [FAQ](#).

Adventureland is located at <http://www.if-legends.org/~adventure/>. Besides there is a mirror maintained by Hans Persson.

[if-legends.org](http://www.if-legends.org) is a non-commercial project devoted to adventure games.

If you have comments on the layout or find bugs in it, please [let me know](#) about it. If you are interested in getting mail each time these pages are updated, you can subscribe [here](#).

Search for a game

Game Name	<input type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="Go"/>
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This search engine is not yet very smart, so please treat it kindly. ;-) If you feed it more than one word, it will look for them *in that order*. Case is not important, but punctuation is. Actually, you can feed it a regular expression and if it's legal in Perl, it will work (if you didn't understand the last sentence, it doesn't matter).

Before I end, I just want to mention [The Interactive Fiction Archive](#). For those of you who don't already know, this is an archive for anonymous ftp that is a goldmine for anyone interested in interactive fiction. It contains loads of playable games, a lot of articles and information about interactive fiction and quite a few different systems for creating your own games. It is maintained by [Volker Blasius](#) who is doing a great job. Contact him for more information. The IF Archive is mirrored at <http://www.ifarchive.org/>.

Thanks to [Maike Liedtke](#) for the Adventureland logo.

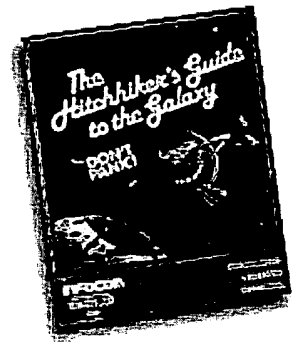
[Adventureland](#) was created by Hans Persson and is now maintained by [Stefan Meier](#).

If you find any errors or have information that is missing, please [let me know](#)

DOUGLAS ADAMS . COM



The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy - The Adventure Game



The Infocom adventure is rightly remembered as a classic of its time - the mere mention of Babel Fish or intelligent doors still provokes nervous reactions in those who regularly stayed up until the early hours trying to defeat the fiendish puzzles. It was one of the best-selling games of 1985, shifting over 250,000 copies that year alone! It also won many "Game Of The Year" awards from various magazines and organisations, and is still remembered as one of the best (if not **the** best) pieces of interactive fiction ever produced. If you're very, very lucky, you might uncover a copy of the aptly-named "Lost Treasures Of Infocom" compendium, which includes HHG.

...and now you can play it [here](#)

LANGUAGE: **English**
PUBLISHER: **Infocom**

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Designing Computer Games

by Adam Wiggins (boone@ucsd.edu)

So why do we play computer games? I know that my love of game programming second only to actually playing them. In fact many long hours have been spent playing Angband, or Might and Magic, or Wing Commander, when they could have been spent doing something more productive like actually working on my own projects. But of course, you can't write games without a good feeling for what's already out there. Most of the very best game designers and programmers are also avid gamers. And that is, I think, what sets apart game programmers from other parts of the computer industry: there's really no one in it who considers it just a job (at least, no one of significance). Game programmers work long hours for pay that may or may not be as good as the guy who works down the street 9 to 5 writing database front-ends. But hey, it's something we love, and that makes it all worth it.

So what am I getting at here? I probably haven't told you anything you don't already know. What I'd like to cover in this article is something a little broader in the area of game design: how can you make a game "good?" It's hardly something you can easily describe, and nearly impossible to put into a design. Game players even have a fairly wide range of opinions on what exactly is "good" - does it mean fun? Does it mean enthralling? Does it mean exciting? Does it mean awe-inspiring? Probably all of these things, and more.

So how does one go about designing a game that is going to turn out to be something people will want to play again and again? Stuff like "we'll put in cool graphics, that'll make people want to play it a lot" hardly does it. This might seem obvious, but it doesn't seem to be these days. So many developers focus on filling up a CD-ROM with pretty pictures and sounds that they forget about making an actual game. Even people who are just getting started in trying to write their own games seem to spend more time wondering how to get into mode X or play digital sound or replace the keyboard interrupt. All these things are certainly important, but they all come later in the development of the game, during the actual coding phase. I know that when I first started attempting some small games, my first thought was to just start coding and see what I came up with. The result was that I often didn't quite realize where I was going and often ended up backtracking because I realized that something wasn't going to work the way I had envisioned it, namely because I hadn't thought it through. For a small project, though, this isn't a big deal. For a large one (like any sellable game would be) this can be fatal.

Let's assume, now, that you know how to program, and you know how to program games. Now you want to put that knowledge to use by creating a game that you can throw out onto the shareware market, to get yourself "known" in the industry, and maybe even make a little money on registrations. As a programmer, your first response is probably to sit down and start by typing out main(). But that's jumping the gun quite a bit. Instead, I recommend a (fairly simple, actually) process before you ever begin coding. Obviously how you

do this is going to vary, and you should use whatever works best for you. But I can't emphasize enough how important the design phase is; don't get impatient and try to jump into coding.

Side note: the one exception to this is if you have an idea for an engine using a new technique for 3D rendering or something. In this case you'll probably want to write a small test program to make sure your technique is going to work. I'll assume, though, that you're writing a game for which there is already a "standard" engine, such as an overhead RPG, a side-scrolling shoot-em-up, a hex-based wargame, etc.

1) First things first - what kind of a game do you want to write? This is going to depend a lot on the resources available to you. If you don't have an artist and don't plan on getting one, and you're not an artist yourself, you'll need to do something for which not a lot of bitmapped art is needed. This might be a polygon-based flight simulator or arcade game, or perhaps a tile-based wargame or RPG. Also it should probably be a game which is going to appeal to *you*. If you don't like wargames, don't try to write one just because the art is minimal. I don't know what all to say about this, since understanding your resources is probably only something that comes to you once you've tried to do a game, so if it's your first try you'll just have to take your best guess. If nothing else, plan on something that you're sure you can do, rather than something that is a little beyond your reach but you think you can probably do. This stage is much more critical for "original" games. Once you decide to do a side-scroller, you've probably already got a good feel for how it works and the basic game mechanics since there are tons of them out there. If it's something like Tetris, where the idea is almost totally new, you have no idea whether the game has even the potential to be fun. Games like these have a much bigger chance to do really, really well since no one has ever seen anything like them before (Tetris, Lemmings, and SimCity are all good examples) but on the other hand it has a much larger chance of simply fading into oblivion. (Remember Atomino, or Pipe Dreams, or Thunder Strike? Didn't think so...)

2) What kind of game you pick isn't incredibly important, as long as it's got potential (most do). The stage that is most important is this one right here, number two. You probably should do no coding until this stage is complete. What you do here also varies widely with what type of game it's going to be. The most important thing is to start out broad: what's the best thing about my game going to be? If you answer "cool graphics" I condemn your game to rot on the shelves along with Outpost and Strike Commander. If it's an adventure, the answer should be something like "story" or "setting." If it's an RPG, the answer should be something like "exploration." If it's a shooter, the answer should be something like "action" or "excitement." And so on. From there, you also need to define how the game is going to try to make you feel as you play it. Many games suffer from a sort of schizophrenia in that they seem to get confused whether they are trying to be funny, or mysterious, or exciting. Not that a game can't be all of these, but balancing multiple moods is very tricky. You need to pick a mood and put most of your effort into promoting that. Doom, to pick one of the most wildly successful examples of this, has you crawling through dark corridors, battling demons, and

doing other similar stuff, all of which promotes the suspense. They back it all up remarkable well with dark graphics, low and driving music, demonic sounds, etc - just like any good suspense thriller, except it's all that much better because the player is the one in control. Similarly, Lesuire Suit Larry has done remarkably well given fairly linear plotlines and trivial puzzles due to the constant antics of Larry Laffer. Ultima places you on a huge map, gives you many virtual miles of dungeons, countrysides, and towns to explore, filled with distinctive NPCs and interesting plot twists.

Maybe I'm using too many examples - you're thinking, "Okay, that's great, but I want my game to be different!" It's hard to just tell you how to do it, or even give an outline for it. I'm just trying to give examples to show how games focus on one mood and put all their resources into bringing that to the user. You might even argue that wargames are different, since they are a more objective type game - mostly lost of numbers and such. But a good wargame makes you feel like you actually are controlling real units, which respond realistically to your commands. A good wargame makes you surprised when an enemy craft slips through your defenses, and makes you feel pride when you draw your opponent into a carefully constructed trap. I suppose the only *real* objection to this type of game design would be totally abstract puzzle games like Tetris. In this area, I can't offer much help, particularly since I really play very few puzzle games. On the other hand, these kind of games are in the minority, and I'd probably encourage you to avoid them unless you think you have a really unique and intersting design. Puzzle games are probably the most numerous type of game in the shareware market, but very few that I have seen have done well.

Once you've established the basic goals of your game, start getting more specific. But always keep the goals in mind for each element of the game. Start with a broad idea of how the game will play, and focus in on individual elements, right down to the nitty-gritty of the interface, what kind of algorithms are going to be used for the low-level stuff, etc. You are, of course, limited by whatever the current technology can handle, so keep that in mind. Write everything down; if you've got multiple designers working on the game, sit down and brainstorm, but be sure to record it all. Think every element through, make sure that it's exactly what you want to do. Draw screen sketches, consider how you will code the stuff, etc. When I first sat down to work on the game I'm currently working on, I wrote out about 20 full pages of specs. It a fairly simple game, and I'm glad I did that much but I almost wish I had done 50 pages, or 100. When you've got more than one person that's going to be working on it, this is even more critical - make *all* the important design decisions here, and write them down so that there is no misunderstanding later.

3) Okay, now all that's left it to write the damn thing, eh? Naturally this is going to be the most time-consuming part, depending on the complexity of the project, the number of people involved, and what kind of tools you have available. But, you're probably wondering, where to start? Now that you have a well-documented spec for your sure-to-be bestseller game, should you just plop down and start writing out your main? Or perhaps start building the low level functions first? If you're doing a the type of game where the engine basically is the game (such as a simulation or arcade game), you'll probably want to start low and

build your way up. If you're doing a strategy or puzzle game, it's probably better to start by writing a text or simplified version of the game, just to see how it plays. My preferred technique involves a sort of "middle-last" approach. Rather than doing top-down or bottom-up, I do both at once; I begin by writing out my header files and my main function, then build the low level modules and gradually work my way towards the middle-level functions. I also know people who take this a step further - one guy likes to write out **all** his header files before writing a single line of actual code. This isn't a bad idea, as thinking about what kinds of data you're going to be dealing with forces you to consider everything more carefully, in a way that isn't really possible when you're just thinking about the algorithms in an abstract way in your head.

You also have to consider what tools you already have available to you: if you're writing a tile-based RPG from scratch, you'll probably want to write a map-editor first. This will allow you to define the file formats, write up simple display routines and such, but since the editor probably isn't something that is ever going to be released to the public, you can make mistakes, write a simplified (read: unoptimized) version of your display routines, etc. There are also all kinds of small low-level modules that you need: compression routines, graphics functions, music and sound effects libraries, text display, keyboard handling, etc. Some of this you may already have from past projects, or you may have a prepackaged library for some of these things. If you're going to put in modem play (multiplayer gaming is the Next Big Thing, hint hint), you'll need to write comm routines and smooth them out before trying to integrate them into the game, etc.

4) So now you've spent every night of the last 14 months hunched over your keyboard, swilling Pepsi by the two-liter with Sepultura blasting through your stereo and twinkie wrappers all over the floor, and you've written what seems to be a complete and working game! Now enters the final stage, one which tends not to get the emphasis it deserves. Assuming you stuck to your design fairly well, and your design was a good one in the first place, your game should pretty much achieve whatever goal it was you were after. But now it's time to put it to the test. Of course you'll want to test it quite a bit yourself, checking for obvious bugs and problems, but now you need to turn it over to someone apart from the project, who can come in with a fresh view and find those bugs you overlooked, point out which features are annoying, which things don't make sense, etc. This can be frustrating, as you may feel at this point as if you've really finished writing the game, but you haven't. It's easy to get annoyed when people find problems with your program, but you have to roll with it, as it's all a part of the process. I've been on both sides of the testing fence, but more often the programmer. I know how frustrating it is when you write what you think is the absolute, final, perfect version and two hours later a tester appears at your door with a list of bugs, misspellings, formatting problems and so on. At any rate, **don't** try to cut this stage short. You'll be anxious to get it out on the market, but releasing products too early has been the death of many products which turned out to be quite good once they finally got to what really should have been the release version (Darklands and Ultima 7 come to mind...).

One thing I'd like to throw in here, because so many games have

had this problem, is how important the little things are. That is, I've seen many, many, many games over the years which could have been truly excellent but were rendered nearly unplayable (or at least highly annoying) due to little quirks in the interface or engine. The interface, as with any computer program, is highly important. In a game, the best interface is the one that you see the least of - a truly intuitive interface will feel as if it's not even there, whereas a bad one will distract all attention from the game to itself. Mainly, it should be fairly obvious for someone to figure out, but much more importantly is that it should make mundane tasks (like pulling up stat sheets, or your inventory, or your score) easy and quick once you learn how to use it. If there's something that the user is going to be doing a lot, don't make them go through multiple menus every time - have a single hot key. Sounds obvious, like a lot of the ideas I'm presenting here, but I'm constantly amazed at the crap many games make you go through to do something as simple as finding out what weapon your character is wielding. Aside from the interface, try not to place annoying restrictions on the player, just to "make it tougher." This includes stuff like giving them very limited inventory space, forcing them to save only at inns, or not being able to pause during critical situations. Keep in mind at all times: it's a game, it's supposed to be FUN. If you want to make the game challenging, then bump up the AI, or add more puzzles, or make good items harder to come by, or whatever. Arbitrary restrictions simply annoy the user and make him or her not want to play your game.

Finally, remember that everyone has different preferences. Your interface should give the user a choice of how to do things - clicking on icons, pressing hot keys, pulling down menus, or any combination of the above. Arcade games should have fully customizable keys. Strategy games should have a lot of options for the AI's behavior, starting situations, fog-of-war, and other stuff that varies from person to person. Even doing something as simple as putting in difficulty settings on your RPG can open up your product to whole new audiences. The user wants to explore a world that you create with your game - they should never feel tied down by the limits of the program, or simply by what the designer thinks they might want. You can't please everyone, but forcing the player into a linear little path and leading them through by the nose pleases (almost) no one. And of course those "little things" that you put in as extra touches, things that make the gamer say, "hey, cool" or perhaps chuckle a bit, are always fun, and not a whole lot of work. It could be putting in a secret level, or a special unit not mentioned in the documentation, or even just an obscure little gamer in-joke. (I couldn't stop laughing when I ran across Scorpia in Might & Magic III...)

Now you're done, right? You've got a fun game which you know you can make lots of money from. How to market it? I probably have the least personal experience in this area than any of the others I've mentioned, but I know quite a few people who have been through this process. There are three main options. One is to go through a "big" publisher like Virgin, EA, etc. It's very difficult, however, to break into this market - a few friends of mine got months and months of run-around trying to market their game this way, and finally gave up. So I'd recommend shareware - the big publishers take a rather large cut of the profits as well. As far

as shareware, you can either go through a shareware publisher (Apogee and Epic are the two "big" shareware publishers) or just do it yourself. There are merits either way. Many people have been very happy with the marketing that these companies have done for them. They handle stuff like advertising, distribution, take orders (accepting credit cards for payment vastly increases your potential profits since people are more likely to do it on the spur of the moment), and even help you beta-test and fill in weak parts of the game (art, music, whatever). However, they do take a good chunk of the profits. Whether this is worth it to you depends on the game, and how much time you want to spend supporting it (namely taking orders and such). I'd say the easiest way to make a decision on this one is simply to ask a few representatives to tell you what kind of things you can expect from the company they represent, and at what cost. Then you can simply weigh it against the benefit of the 100% profit you get from doing it yourself.

That's about it (whew!). Of course I'd really like to encourage you to support your products, fix bugs that players find, maybe make changes or additions that your (registered) users request. This may seem a bit extraneous now, but in the end everyone wins since the customer is happier, which means he or she will be more encouraged to continue to support your efforts in the future.

I hope at least a little of this helps you on your game-design attempts. It ain't easy, but the rewards are pretty damn good too. Good luck!

If you're wondering, the information contained here is a combination of my own personal knowledge and experiences, combined with the many, many people I have spoken with on this subject (both on-line and in "real" life).

Feel free to mail me with comments, corrections, compliments (gasp!), flames, questions, or whatever. And as usual you can always find me on rec.games.programmer, where there are plenty of knowledgeable people, so if I can't answer your question, someone else probably can.



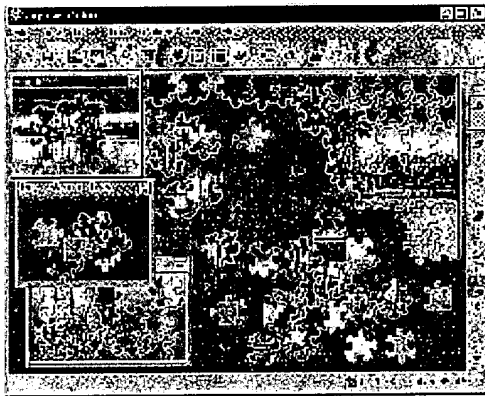
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Jigsaws Galore Version 4

Jigsaws Galore: Ultimate Windows Jigsaw Player/Creator...

Version 4 greatly improves the look and feel of the jigsaws. Individual pieces now have "beveled" edges with light and shade for a true 3D appearance and there are now 6 different shape styles to choose from, including "classic", "stars" and "bubbles". You can even choose the thickness of pieces from "paper", "card" and "wood". Piece size, shape, thickness and "oddness" can now be changed on the fly while solving a jigsaw. A backdrop "ghost" image of the completed jigsaw can be superimposed to aid play. The windows now support "skins", backdrop colors can have a pleasing graduated effect and music supports MIDI, MP3 and WAV files. The jigsaw preview screen has been enhanced to show thumbnails of all the jigsaws in the current folder at a glance, so finding your favorites is easier. Click the *Jigsaws Galore* link above to find out what else is in the latest version!

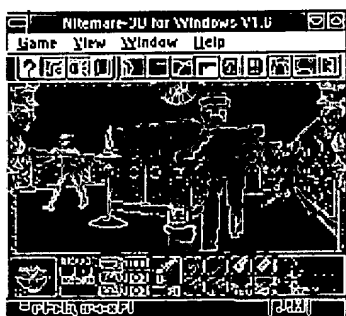
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ZDNet gave *Jigsaws Galore* their highest 5-star award!

Rated ★★★★★ WebAttack gave *Jigsaws Galore* their highest 5-star award!
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Nitemare-3D: 3D Action game for Windows & DOS...

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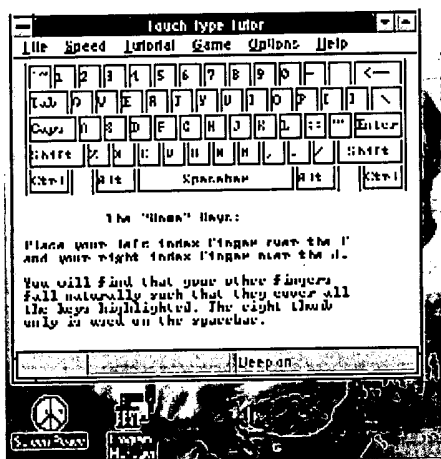
Hugo Trilogy for Windows: Adventure set for Windows...

Hugo for Windows is the complete set of three Hugo adventures, specifically for Windows. Unlike the original DOS versions listed below, the new Windows versions feature an intuitive point & click mouse interface, toolbar, status bar, full MIDI background music and digital sound effects (with a sound card) and complete online help and hints for every puzzle. For those who like the challenge, the original text command interface can still be used in addition to, or instead of the point & click interface.



Hugo's House of Horrors: Adventure game for DOS...

Hugo's House of Horrors is a "traditional style" adventure game using a combination of 2D animated graphics and simple typed commands.



Touch Type Tutor: Typing Tutor for Windows & DOS...

Touch Type Tutor is a very simple to use program to teach you the skill of touch typing. It intelligently adapts itself to your worst keys to give you the practise where you need it the most, ensuring the fastest possible learning curve. It can also be used to measure the speed of a professional touch typist. <http://www.puzzledepot.com/cwe/index.shtml?graylink>



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Welcome to the new GAMA website.

Our new site is designed to present information on GAMA and the Adventure Games Industry. This site includes an explanation of GAMA, it's members and it's programs. Information for the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design, the GAMA Industry Tradeshow and the public Origins Games Expo are also presented. News updates from GAMA and Industry Members will be posted regularly. If you have a news item you wish to submit please email our website manager at techman@gama.org.

The Game Manufacturers Association is an international non-profit trade association serving the adventure games industry--the companies that bring you great family, strategy, roleplaying, popular trading card, historical boardgames and miniatures. The members of GAMA are interested in presenting the many social, educational and entertainment advantages of games. Here at GAMA's web site, you'll find information on the games industry as well as GAMA and the many events and activities that GAMA sponsors.

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What is GAMA?

GAMA is the Game Manufacturers Association, a non-profit international trade association of companies and individuals involved in the design, production, distribution and sale of strategy, roleplaying, card, board and family games. GAMA promotes the game industry through a wide range of efforts--from sponsoring the premier national game convention, Origins, to the new retailer mentoring program. GAMA also offers its members a unique group of technical, legal, marketing and other support services needed to survive in our rapidly growing industry.

GAMA has over 300 member companies and organizations, from industry giants like Wizards of the Coast and Games Workshop, to individual retail stores, freelance writers and artists, and even gaming clubs. GAMA offers its members support in technical, legal, and marketing matters. The organization sponsors the yearly Origins gaming convention, as well as its annual Trade Show for game retailers. Several committees of volunteers handle projects such as the Gaming & Education newsletter and the Industry Watch committee.

In addition to these and many other industry-boosting activities, membership in GAMA provides game companies with a number of direct benefits. For more information on GAMA, go to the Join section.

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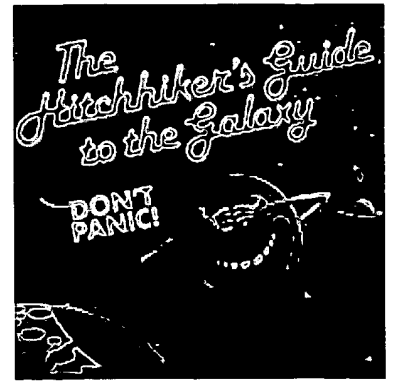
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HHGG Infocom Adventure



notified when the full shareware version becomes available, please e-mail Richard Harris at TDV (rh@tdv.com).

If you aren't familiar with the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy you will likely be very confused. If you are familiar with the HHGG, you will also be very confused - while the game starts similarly to the book, it soon diverges. In summary, you play the part of Arthur Dent a rather ordinary and ineffectual Earth being with a liking for tea. The game starts when the local council makes a spirited attempt to demolish your house to make way for a bypass. While you're trying to cope with that, your friend Ford Prefect drops past to tell you that your efforts are pointless, as the Earth itself is about to be demolished to make way for a Hyperspace bypass. The rest is up to you!

The Basics :

To help you with the basics of playing the game, here's a few basic commands to get you started.

Commands are entered at the > prompt at the bottom of the screen. These are only a small part of what the game understands - try whatever English commands seem appropriate at any given point. Note that the game only recognises the first six characters of each word.

Going Places:

Compass directions will get you most places - use E, W, S, N, NE etc. (Out, In, Down and Up will also work in many places).

Typical Actions:

Lie Down (you'll find this useful when facing the bulldozer)
Get Up (a good way to start the game)

Look - gives you a full description of your current location

Diagnose - gives you a report of your physical condition

Inventory - gives you a list of what you are carrying (abbreviates to I)

Wait - electronic equivalent of taking a nap

Get, Get All - lets you pick things up

Open - open something closed

Examine - fully describe an object

Drop, Drop All - put things down

Where is, What is, Who is - questions about places, things and people in the game

Communicating:

When you come across another character in the game, you can talk to them by entering their name followed by a comma, then the question, e.g.:

Ford, where are you going?

Marvin, give me the hammer



History

There was a time when computer games didn't have graphics. Or at least they couldn't have graphics and sound at the same time. They certainly couldn't have graphics, sound and enough content to keep even a human being amused for more than a few minutes. So they had text. This was radical - a computer game you could control by typing in commands. The game would then respond to your commands with a breathtakingly prescient understanding of your intent. Or not. Usually not - the early text parsers (circa 1977) weren't that bright. But, as long as you limited yourself to what the game understood and the game designers wrote creatively enough to misunderstand you in a humorous and entertaining fashion, it all worked. It therefore stands to reason that any game which combined a really good programmer with a really good writer was likely to do well. So when Steve Meretzky of Infocom got together with Douglas Adams to create a

game based around the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, the result was never going to be less than interesting and more than likely insane. So it proved - the Hitchhiker's Guide adventure game was one of the best-selling games of its era, selling some 350,000 copies. In 1984.

Then graphics games came along and the computer using portion of the human race forgot all about 500,000 years of language evolution and went straight back to the electronic equivalent of banging rocks together - the point'n'click game. Infocom and most of its competitors went to the wall - signaling the arrival of the post-literate society. That's the way it's been for most of the last dozen years.

Something strange has now happened. The Net, and particularly e-mail, has become an integral part of millions of lives. People have learned to type again and are taking an interest in interacting, via their computers, with other people and with content. At TDV, we've taken the basic need to create products with wit, intelligence and humour and created Starship Titanic (<http://www.starshiptitanic.com/>) - the game that reinvented the art of conversation. Following many requests from HHG fans and those sad people who still remember it, we're also re-releasing the original game as shareware in three formats: Mac, PC and Java. What you see here is the last of these. Enjoy.



Control:

Save/Restore: don't work in the Web version.

Restart will restart the game, after giving you your score Quit will end the game, give you your score and end the Java session Brief will only describe a location fully the first time you enter it. Thereafter you'll get a short description only Superbrief takes it further - you'll only get the name of the place. Verbose switches off the effects of the Brief and Superbrief commands - you'll get a full description each time you enter a location. Score will give you your current score. You get points for successfully

Credits:

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy is Copyright (C) [Douglas Adams](#) and [The Digital Village](#)

And if you think that this is a complicated copyright notice, just wait until Disney brings the feature film out.

Java Z interpreter courtesy of [Matthew Russotto](#)

Software archaeology by [Richard Harris](#) at TDV.

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"Three people are stranded on a planet on the far side of the galaxy. In order to return to earth they must first locate a crystal to power their spacecraft. But (and this is where the whole thing begins to get tricky) to find the crystal they must navigate their way through a series of practical and mental problems, devised by a fiendish alien intelligence."



Newsflash - Go and vote for the Adventure Game as best Kids TV show at <http://www.channel4.com/greatest/kidstv/index.html>

Yes at last you have found a page that is solely devoted to that wonderous programme called **The Adventure Game**. Please do look round **all** of the site as most of your questions can be answered, or if still puzzled have a look at the FAQ, guestbook or email me. **(DO NOT email me about videos!)** For ease of navigation use the menu at the top of each page which will take you to your chosen destination.

Please use the SiteGuide to find your way about and to check out all the news and what's coming soon.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the site/emailed me and signed the guestbook over the last 2 years.

Why not visit our [chat room/discussion forum](#) dedicated to The Adventure Game and other top kids programs of the time - Explore the rest of [Pukka](#) while you are there, or if you'd like to know more about this sites author take a look at my [homepages](#).

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Click here to download the trial version (file size is 3 mb).

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screenshots and more information**

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Through the Glass**

Lewis Carroll fans will



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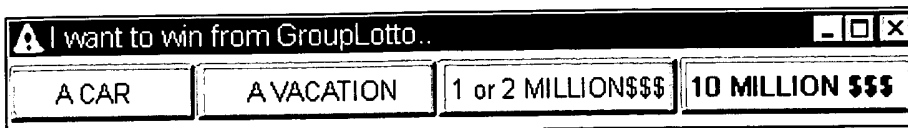
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In The Spotlight

Fri, Aug 10, 2001

GMD is Dead; Long Live IFArchive

After nearly a decade of service, the interactive fiction archive at GMD is being shut down. But the archive isn't going away -- instead, it's found a new home.

Dave Lebling Interview

The fine folks at Adventure Collective and I ask the former Infocom implementor a number of questions.

Adventure Game News

Keep track of what's happening in the world of adventure games. Updated on a regular basis.

Discussion: [FTF Review](#) - Emily Short reviews Rob Wheeler's game

Discussion: [Play Majestic](#) - First episode of the game is free

Did You Know?

You may not believe this -- goodness knows this particular game has had a rough and tumultuous road -- but MacPlay, the Macintosh branch of Interplay which shut down in 1997, is back, and is working on a Mac port of *Zork Grand Inquisitor*. [Surely you jest.](#)

Essentials

Beginner Links

New to adventure games? Aren't sure about "interactive fiction"? We've got articles telling you what adventure games are, how you play them, and where you can find some.

Adventure Game Walkthroughs

If you're stuck in an adventure game and don't know what to do next, these walkthroughs and hints can keep you going.

Adventure Game Reviews

Want to know what I and others thought of a range of both graphic and text adventure games? Check this index. If you'd prefer, you can also [check out our quick ratings](#) and see how other players rated your favorite games, or give your own opinions.

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picks

If you're new to adventure games and would like to know more about either text adventure or graphic adventures, these links will help you get started.

[Adventure Game Glossary](#)

Aren't sure what "mimesis" or "gone gold" mean? Wondering where "xyzzzy" and "plugh" came from? Try this glossary of common adventure game terms.

[A Beginner's Guide to Graphic Adventure Games](#)

From the history of graphic adventure games to the various types of adventures, this article covers them all.

[Downloading and Running Text Adventures](#)

Interested in playing text adventures, but you aren't sure what files you need? Let me lead you through the thicket of interpreters and game files.

[Finding Your Way Around the IF Archive](#)

The interactive fiction archive (sometimes called GMD) is your source for text adventures and adventure programming languages. But do you know how to navigate the archive?

[Getting Into Text Adventures](#)

One challenge facing newcomers to text adventures is deciding what to play. Here's my list of recommended games.

[How to Play a Text Adventure](#)

If you're new to the world of text adventures, this article will help you learn how to play them.

[Introducing Interactive Fiction](#)

Not sure just what is meant by "interactive fiction"? Here's a guide to the lingo and what it all means.

[Getting Unstuck](#)

Everyone who plays adventure games gets stuck from time to time. How do you find the hints and walkthroughs that will get you unstuck, though?

[Windows Text Adventure Interpreters](#)

Interested in playing text adventures on your PC running Windows? This guide will lead you through the steps of



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obtaining interpreters.

Linux Text Adventure Interpreters

If you're interested in playing text adventures under Linux, you've got quite a job ahead of you. Fortunately, this guide can help you get started.

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A Beginner's Guide to Graphic Adventure Games

Perhaps you're interested in computer games, but find you don't have the reflexes that action-oriented games demand. Perhaps you enjoy solving puzzles and figuring out stories from disparate clues, the kind of person who really gets into mysteries. Perhaps you'd like to explore distant planets, or struggle against an ancient evil, or just participate in a great story.

If so, graphic adventure games may be for you.

Unfortunately, you've got a bit of a learning curve to master before you can understand what's going on in this genre of computer games. Terms like "Myst-alike" and "third person game" are thrown about with abandon. In this article I'm going to lead you through some of the thicket of history that surrounds adventure games.

A Brief History

In the beginning were text adventures. They told a story through text. The program would describe a situation, you'd type in your response, and the program would then tell you the results of your command.

As computers got more powerful and their graphic capabilities matured, graphic adventure games began to appear. The earliest ones merely added still pictures to text, **showing you a room as well as describing it.**

Then came **Sierra On-Line's *King's Quest*.**

You still typed in commands,

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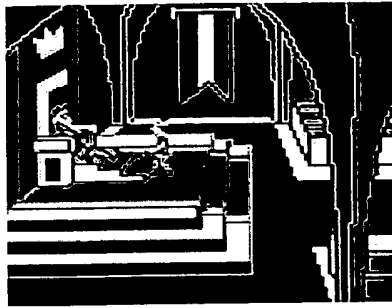
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**Got a question?
Ask an Expert****King's Quest 1**

1980's. Newly-formed Lucasfilm Games, later renamed LucasArts, eventually began creating similar graphic adventure games.

The next big shift came in 1993, when Cyan released *Myst*. Instead of having you move a character around on-screen, *Myst* let you see the game world through the eyes of your character.

It was a fundamentally different approach to graphic adventure games, one which changed the genre for good or ill.

The most recent trend has been the blending of other genres with adventure games. Action/adventure games, role-playing adventure games, role-playing adventure games with action, all have made their appearance in recent years.

**Myst**

but it *showed* you locations instead of describing them through text. You maneuvered Graham around and about the kingdom of Davenport, solving puzzles and advancing the story.

Sierra had a near death-grip on this style of graphic adventure game throughout the mid-



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ADVENT /ad'vent/ n.

The prototypical computer adventure game, first designed by Will Crowther on the **PDP-10** in the mid-1970s as an attempt at computer-refereed fantasy gaming, and expanded into a puzzle-oriented game by Don Woods at Stanford in 1976. (Woods had been one of the authors of **INTERCAL**.) Now better known as Adventure or Colossal Cave Adventure, but the **TOPS-10** operating system permitted only six-letter filenames. See also **vadding**, **Zork**, and **Infocom**.

This game defined the terse, dryly humorous style since expected in text adventure games, and popularized several tag lines that have become fixtures of hacker-speak: "A huge green fierce snake bars the way!" "I see no X here" (for some noun X). "You are in a maze of twisty little passages, all alike." "You are in a little maze of twisty passages, all different." The `magic words' **xyzyzy** and **plugh** also derive from this game.

Crowther, by the way, participated in the exploration of the Mammoth & Flint Ridge cave system; it actually *has* a `Colossal Cave' and a `Bedquilt' as in the game, and the `Y2' that also turns up is cavers' jargon for a map reference to a secondary entrance.

ADVENT sources are available for FTP at <ftp://ftp.wustl.edu/doc/misc/if-archive/games/source/advent.tar.Z>. There is a [Colossal Cave Adventure](#) page.

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AI Beyond Computer Games

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Abstract

This paper discusses and critiques the current state of digital interactive entertainment, with references to recent projects from both industry and academia. Suggestions are given for new directions to pursue, particularly those that involve the application of artificial intelligence and artificial life technologies for making virtual characters and interactive story systems.

Artificial Progress

Read the back of the box of any hot new computer game today and you'll be bombarded with exciting descriptions of state-of-the-art game technologies. In a frenzied attempt to keep up with the latest hardware, new games woo consumers with eye-catching realtime 3D graphics, ultra-high polygon counts, moving cameras, motion capture, and of course artificial intelligence. AI is generally considered these days to be one of the most important components of a computer game. Traditionally AI is used to control the behavior of game opponents, whether they be tanks and armies in a realtime strategy game, or heavily armed monsters in a first-person shooter, or faceless adversaries in a virtual chess tournament. Gamers feel that the better the AI is, the better the game is. One of the latest technologies being applied to computer games, Artificial Life, was described as "one of gaming's hottest new frontiers" by *Next Generation*, a popular computer and videogaming magazine.¹

It can't be denied that over the past several years the production quality of games have been steadily increasing, as well as their production budgets. And the speed and power of computer hardware continues to grow at a phenomenal rate, spurring developers to constantly improve their games' graphics and animation. But have the designs of new games been improving as well? Or are we just seeing souped-up versions of the same old games from the past? What role does AI play in this situation?

Chris Crawford, an outspoken veteran of the game industry who wrote dozens of essays about design and the state of the industry in his journal *Interactive Entertainment Design*, laments about computer games "reaching a state of moribund stasis". Crawford describes how the current state of computer games is stagnating – becoming ever more market-driven, expensive to develop, and very often derivative clones of one another. Take a look at the vast majority of games coming out today and you'll notice they are fundamentally the same as they were in the eighties – "flight simulators, sports games, graphic adventures, role-playing games, strategy wargames, running-jumping-climbing games, 'shooters', puzzle games... The only changes that we have seen in these ten years have been embellishments. The graphics, animations and sound are better. The games have more internal detail, larger worlds, more complexity. But the basic designs have not changed."^{2,3}

As a designer and programmer who has been working the game industry for the past seven years, I wholeheartedly agree with Crawford's observations. I am noticing that by and large, computer game design is not moving forward, even though PC's are now being purchased in droves by mainstream consumers who are not "gamers". This paper will discuss new directions that computer games can go in, and how artificial intelligence will be instrumental in that change.

What Do People Want? It's No Puzzle

In the aforementioned *Next Generation* article about Artificial Life, a co-worker and I were quoted as saying, "When people talk about wanting great A-Life (or great AI, for that matter), what they really want is the experience of interacting with something truly alive." In developing Virtual Petz, a series of interactive lifelike computer characters from PF Magic, our goal was to create the best and most interactive "illusion of life" available on a personal computer. By combining a direct interaction interface with highly expressive and personality-rich characters, users are easily able to suspend their disbelief and form emotional relationships with their adopted Dogz and Catz.⁴ We feel that the worldwide popularity and critical acclaim of Virtual Petz is reasonable evidence that users are looking for new types of experiences beyond traditional computer games.

But when you think about it, you realize it's more than a great interactive illusion of life that people want from their entertainment. Look at the most popular forms of entertainment today – movies, television, and books. They're mostly about *people*, their stories, their dramas, their lives. As the computer becomes ubiquitous in people's homes, it becomes a viable new mass-market medium for entertainment. There's every reason to believe that users will want computer-based entertainment to be about similar topics and themes that they enjoy in other media: people. I'll even go so far to say that people will expect entertainment in the computer medium to rise to the artistic level of the best cinema, theater and literature.

What kinds of entertainment are we talking about here? Interactive stories? Virtual reality? Perhaps the most popular visualization of futuristic computer entertainment is the Holodeck from *Star Trek*. The Holodeck is a "universal fantasy machine"⁵ where users can immerse themselves in rich storyworlds with characters they can talk to, form relationships with, touch and be touched by, and together alter the course of events – literally creating a new story in realtime. In such a vision of interactive entertainment, artificial intelligence would be an essential ingredient. But even if the Holodeck eventually gets created, clearly it is a long way off from where we are today. What is feasible in the short term? What can we do now, with existing technologies?

First we need to realize that the majority of people out there won't be interested in today's computer games. *Quake*, *Myst*, *Tomb Raider*, *Mario* – these are goal-oriented games that require users to master complex joystick skills and solve endless numbers of frustrating puzzles. Personally, I count myself as one of these people. I don't play games. I'm not a gamer. I don't like puzzles. When talking about new directions to innovate in, let's get rid of the term "games"! For lack of a better term for what the majority of people want, let's call it *character-centric interactive entertainment*.

Right now you may be asking, why not stick with proven mediums for this kind of entertainment? Maybe computers are best suited for games as we know it, and we should leave character-centric entertainment to film, TV and books? I don't think this is true. Interactivity allows for an entertainment experience that actively pays attention to you, that listens to you, adapts to you, becomes custom for you – making the experience much more personal, and therefore more powerful and affecting. It should be made clear that I'm talking about an experience that could only be constructed in this new medium, not simply a port of a story from a traditional medium.

A-Star is Born

To begin moving towards character-centric interactive entertainment, it makes sense that one should begin by developing virtual character technology. It's true that computer games have always had characters, but in general these have been no more than shallow cardboard-cutouts. Characters in computer games typically consist of mindless avatar-like puppets controlled by the user, or one-dimensional enemies with limited and often predictable behavior.

However there have been a few software products that have broken out of this mold. In the mid-eighties a lighthearted computer program called *Little Computer People* allowed users to watch and poke at a tiny animated person living in an simple computer house. Ten years later, once the power of computer hardware had advanced by several orders of magnitude, the world's first virtual pets, *Dogz* and *Catz*, were released. Subsequent versions of Virtual Petz offered increasingly sophisticated animation and AI, allowing them to grow into a popular and successful product line that has sold over two million copies worldwide. Around this time a simple handheld keychain toy from Japan called *Tamagotchi* became a hugely successful fad, truly making "virtual pets" a household word. This was soon followed by *Creatures*, the first full-blown commercial entertainment application of Artificial Life and genetic algorithms. In *Creatures* users are able to train and breed fantasy-like mammals whose behavior is controlled by the integration of a neural network, a model of biochemistry and an artificial genome with crossover and mutation.⁶ Not so well known was an unusual adventure game called *The Last Express* where the user participates in a immersive story set on a moving train inhabited by a large cast of computer-controlled virtual characters.

In parallel with (but disconnected to) these developments in industry, several academic media and AI labs began focusing on interactive virtual characters. Several years ago Joseph Bates of Carnegie Mellon University formed the Oz Project to study believable agents and interactive drama. Bates and his team of graduate students developed software architectures for virtual characters using models of behavior, emotion and story structure, and applied them to make the well-known Woggles demonstration.⁷ Other research projects involving virtual characters include Bruce Blumberg's virtual reality dog Silas at the MIT Media Lab; Ken Perlin and Athomas Goldberg's Improv system at New York University; Barbara Hayes-Roth's Virtual Theater Project at Stanford; Karl Sims' virtual creatures from Thinking Machines; and Demetri Terzopoulos' Artificial Fish at the University of Toronto.⁸

These academic papers and pieces of software can hopefully serve as examples of new directions for developers to move in. Many of these projects apply some kind of AI or A-Life technique in the creation of their virtual characters. If you study and play with them you'll find a variety of different approaches and design principles in use. To progress beyond the status quo in computer game design, perhaps a good question to ask at this point would be: what AI or A-Life methods and techniques are best suited for creating character-centric interactive entertainment with mass appeal?

Author, author

Although the line is somewhat blurred in each case, these aforementioned systems tend to approach the problem of creating virtual characters from two different starting points: a more top-down, behavior-based approach (Oz, Petz, Improv) versus a more bottom-up, emergent behavior approach (*Creatures*, Silas, Sims' creatures, Artificial Fish). At their most extreme, the top-down approach requires each behavior to be explicitly defined by the programmer, whereas the bottom-up approach depends on low-level mechanisms (such as neural networks) to cause high-level behaviors to emerge.⁹ The argument for the bottom-up approach is that as

the size and complexity of virtual characters grow, it will become impossible to create all the necessary behaviors by hand. The top-down approach to creating virtual characters will eventually become too unwieldy to use, whereas the bottom-up approach is much more scaleable.

What needs to be considered here is the role of the author in the creation of characters. As we know the best entertainment in traditional media is hand-crafted by talented writers, actors and directors. At the risk of sounding old-fashioned, I see no reason why this won't also be required for interactive entertainment, no matter how sophisticated it gets. Again, entertainment is very often about people and contemporary issues in their lives. I would argue that even the characters in a system like the Holodeck would need to be authored by real people, or at least real people would want to author them.

Because purely bottom-up approaches do not give authors direct control over the behavior of their characters, I challenge the idea that biologically-inspired A-Life alone will be the answer here. Real life, while endlessly rich and complex, is often marked by long stretches of dullness. Users that want to be entertained are not going to be willing to wait very long for something funny or exciting to happen. For example, a recent article about AI in *Game Developer* magazine mentions that the A-Life techniques used to control non-player characters in the *Ultima Online* virtual world had to "be compromised in the interests of game play".¹⁰

Perhaps a successful method would be a *hybrid* between the two approaches: a system that allows a high-degree of direct authorial control, as well as offering some degree of adaptiveness and unpredictable emergent behavior, but without ever getting out of control and "breaking character". With careful attention to design, could one author top-down behaviors to work alongside or together with a finite set of simple bottom-up rules? Could neural networks and genetic algorithms be applied to a dramatic or theatrical model of behavior, not a biological one?¹¹ Integrate such a system with expressive realtime animation, a natural language interface, and a database of common-sense knowledge, and you can go a long way towards creating intelligent, lifelike dramatic characters for interactive entertainment.

This is not to say that there won't be entertaining experiences offered by A-Life. Playing with characters authored in a more top-down behavior-based approach versus a more bottom-up A-Life approach is crudely analogous to going to Disneyland versus going to the zoo. In one entertainment experience you interact with exaggerated, theatrical, personality-rich characters; in the other you interact with realistic, natural, adaptable animals. Both Disneyland and the zoo are fun experiences for people, but for different reasons. (And I hasten to add, Disneyland is a lot more popular.)

Plotting the Future of Interactive Entertainment

Besides virtual characters, artificial intelligence can and will need to be applied to other aspects of character-centric interactive entertainment. For example, an interactive story experience would need some way of controlling the plot of the story. Although typical plots follow the classic structure of a "dramatic arc" – where an inciting incident leads to rising action which builds to crisis, climax and finally denouement – the exact events that make up that plot would need to vary depending on the user's interaction. It seems reasonable that AI techniques could be applied towards making this kind of realtime decision.

Much like the shallow virtual characters described earlier, there exist a slew of computer games, text adventures and interactive movies that call themselves interactive fiction but aren't much more than a collection of turn-based puzzles placed at the nodes of a fixed branching narrative tree. These games are reminiscent of the "choose-your-own-adventure" series of books, where a user cannot cause the plot to go in any directions that weren't pre-defined and pre-scripted by the writer. Users quickly bump up against the limits of the fixed plot structure and feel they have no real choices.

There have been fragmented efforts by a handful of independent groups to create plot *generation* systems, which in theory could create new plots in realtime based on interaction with a user. While there have been some interesting papers and even a few promising demos, there has yet to be a working system that demonstrably makes clear headway towards solving this problem. This area needs much more attention from both academia and industry.

Looking ahead, there are some promising projects currently in development that are applying AI or A-Life in new directions. For example, the Oz group from CMU has formed a startup company called Zoesis, presumably to apply their research to make a commercial product. Chris Crawford is working on an interactive fiction authoring tool called the Erasmatron. PF Magic continues to develop the Virtual Petz product line, with more sophisticated and intelligent characters to be released in upcoming titles. And Cyberlife, the company that made *Creatures*, is continuing to develop their A-Life technology and hopes that by the year 2020 (a "2020 vision") to have developed "all the necessary structures and systems for the creation of truly intelligent, sentient, synthetic life forms." But ultimately it will be up to the gaming community at large to realize that the market for interactive entertainment has grown tremendously in the last several years, to the point where there are more non-gamers than gamers out there. Hopefully with some creative applications of artificial intelligence and attention to what other kinds of interactive experiences are possible to achieve in this medium, we will move more towards what mainstream audiences want to play with.

Acknowledgments

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